

Return to Use Initiative

2006 Demonstration Project

California Gulch: Leadville, Colorado

THE SITE: The California Gulch Superfund Site in Lake County, Colorado, encompasses more than 18 square miles in the Rocky Mountains, about 120 miles west of Denver. Mining, mineral processing, and smelting activities there produced gold, silver, lead, copper, manganese, and zinc for more than 130 continuous years. The site was listed on the National Priorities List in 1983, primarily because of acid mine drainage from the Yak Tunnel, mine waste piles, and tailing ponds that contaminated ground water and caused surface water pollution in the California Gulch area and the Arkansas River. Nearly all of the mines within the California Gulch site boundary are presently inactive, and all of the mills and smelters have been either decommissioned or demolished. Many areas within the site are still undergoing continuing remedial activities, but some of the cleaned up portions of the site are already in reuse. The Robert Emmet Mine section of the site received a Superfund Redevelopment Initiative cooperative agreement in 2001.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Currently, children registered in the Lake County Youth Soccer league play their games in a town 35 miles away. Leadville's adult teams regularly travel 40 miles for games. To alleviate such commuting, Leadville citizens on the Lake County Recreation Advisory Board aim to establish a recreational facility for soccer and other activities. A portion of the site near Leadville's downtown area could be an ideal location for the recreational facility. The United States Soccer Foundation, one of EPA's national partners, awarded a \$10,000 grant to develop conceptual plans for the future Lake County Community Park. With the plan completed, the group is seeking additional funding for construction of the complex.

THE BARRIERS: The portion of the site targeted for the recreational complex currently contains mining slag. Construction activities will require grading and capping of the sharp slag material. EPA will coordinate with stakeholders to ensure that human health and the environment are protected. Another complication is that the site's long history has made county officials and community members wary. The stigma associated with the site creates a powerful deterrent to its reuse.

THE SOLUTION: To help shape a new image and to assure members of the local community that safe reuse is a realistic possibility, EPA is helping to facilitate and maintain an open dialogue among the local

Barriers:

Proposed reuse construction requiring EPA oversight;
Superfund site stigma

Solution:

Construction monitoring by EPA to ensure protection of human health and the environment;
facilitating and maintaining an open dialogue among stakeholders to address concerns



Before:

Part of an 18-square mile mining site in a former mining community in the Rocky Mountains

After:

Proposed recreational complex that ties into local mining heritage and historical trail and complements an ongoing community revitalization effort

government, members of the Leadville community, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, and regulatory agencies. Regular communication is helping to eliminate confusion and misconceptions about reusing Superfund sites by ensuring that the remedy will be safe for children to participate in sports on this portion of the site.

THE SITE NOW: As fundraising and planning for the project progress, the stakeholders will establish a process to seek the views of the community. A professional survey of the site has recently been completed, and the local recreation group hopes to kick off a major fundraising campaign in the fall of 2007. Construction of the recreational facility is expected to begin in the summer of 2008, with potential completion in summer 2009. The completed facility will include a trail extension to link to the Mineral Belt Trail, a 12.5-mile paved trail that loops the City of Leadville, passes through historic mining areas, and offers stunning views of the Rocky Mountains. The Mineral Belt Trail is an important part of the existing reuse at other areas of the site. Local residents hope that the future complex will be a valued asset and an economic enhancement for the community just as the trail has been in recent years.

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